

Training your personnel

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I own a small restaurant franchise. My turnover of personnel in the past few months has been quite high and for the first time I have to focus on training a lot of new employees. Can you give me any advice on how to make my training more effective or simpler to deliver to my staff?

Training your employees is probably the most important investment you can make. Trained employees are happier, stay longer and do a better job. In most studies of what makes an employee happy – being trained for the job usually comes in higher than getting a more money. Training is that important.

As you are experiencing now, there are times when all you seem to do is training new employees. In most good franchise system the franchisor will usually provide you with training manuals, pamphlets, checklists and other tools to help you train your employees. Some franchisors as part of their training program for new franchisees or as part of their advanced franchisee training program even provide training to their franchisees on how to teach. Today we even find franchise systems using the Internet to provide training to franchisee's employees – we call that distance learning.

But what do you do if your franchisor doesn't provide you with the tools? You create them yourself.

A wonderful way to train new employees is through role-playing. Role-playing allows your staff to experience different customer service situations and play act different solutions. It gives you a chance to evaluate their strengths and to give them pointers on what to do in different situations. It's also a lot more fun than simply having you lecture them. For developing strong customer service skills there is nothing better than role-playing.

Manuals skills on the other hand are better trained by using a simple four-step technique.

1. Prepare the employee

Let your staff watch someone else doing the job. This will give them a chance to observe not only the process but also what the end product is supposed to look like. It gives them the opportunity to ask questions and to understand what will be expected of them.

2. Present information to the employee

Once they have watched someone else do the job, now its time for them to do it. But speed is not important at this point. Let them do the task slowly. Leads them though each step and make certain that they do each step correctly.

3. Let the employee practice the skill

At this point its time for them to fly on their own a bit. Have them do the task at half speed and explain to you each step they are doing. As needed continue to provide them with coaching a feedback but the goal at this point is to see how much they understand themselves.

4. Follow up to see that they have learned the skill

Finally, have them do the task at full speed without providing them with any coaching or feedback. This will tell you whether they are ready to do the job themselves and to work with real customers. Periodically observe them and make certain that they are continuing to do the job correctly. Reinforce the right way to do the job if you see them taking short cuts or doing the job incorrectly.

Break the job down into different easy to understand tasks or skills. Don't overwhelm them or try to teach them too many different skills at the same time. If the job is to clean the customer seating area of a restaurant first work on how to mop correctly, or how to sweep correctly or how to wash off the tables correctly. Don't try to teach cleaning the restaurant as one task. There are different skills and each is important.

Training can be time consuming and it can be expensive. But a well-trained employee will service your customers better and it is an investment that pays dividends quickly.